

PLEASANT UNION

1890-1990



History of
PLEASANT UNION
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1890 - 1990

FOR REPRINTS CONTACT:

Sharon R. Hughes

Route 2, Box 410

Denton, N.C. 27239

(919) 241-2219

History of

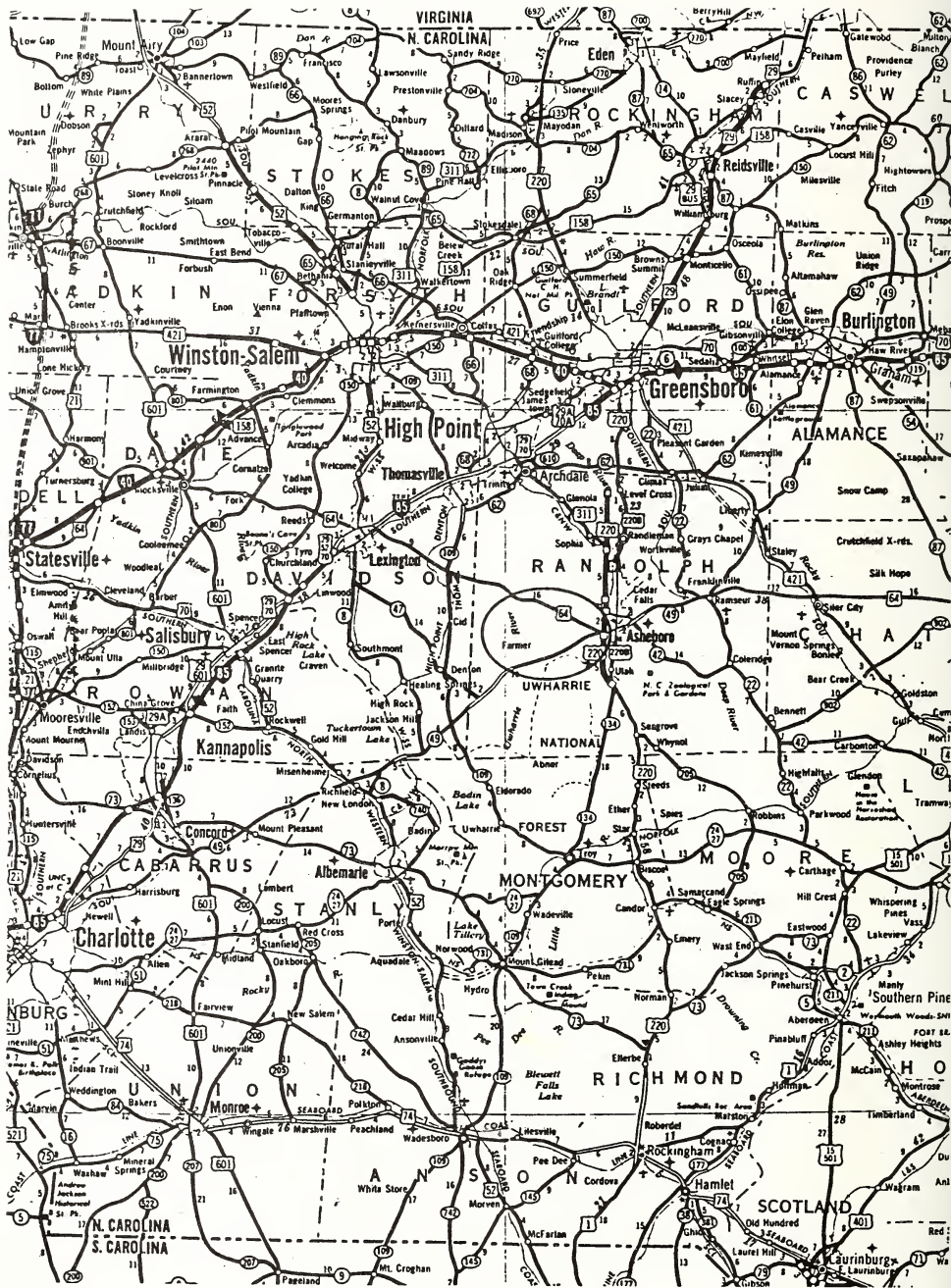
PLEASANT UNION

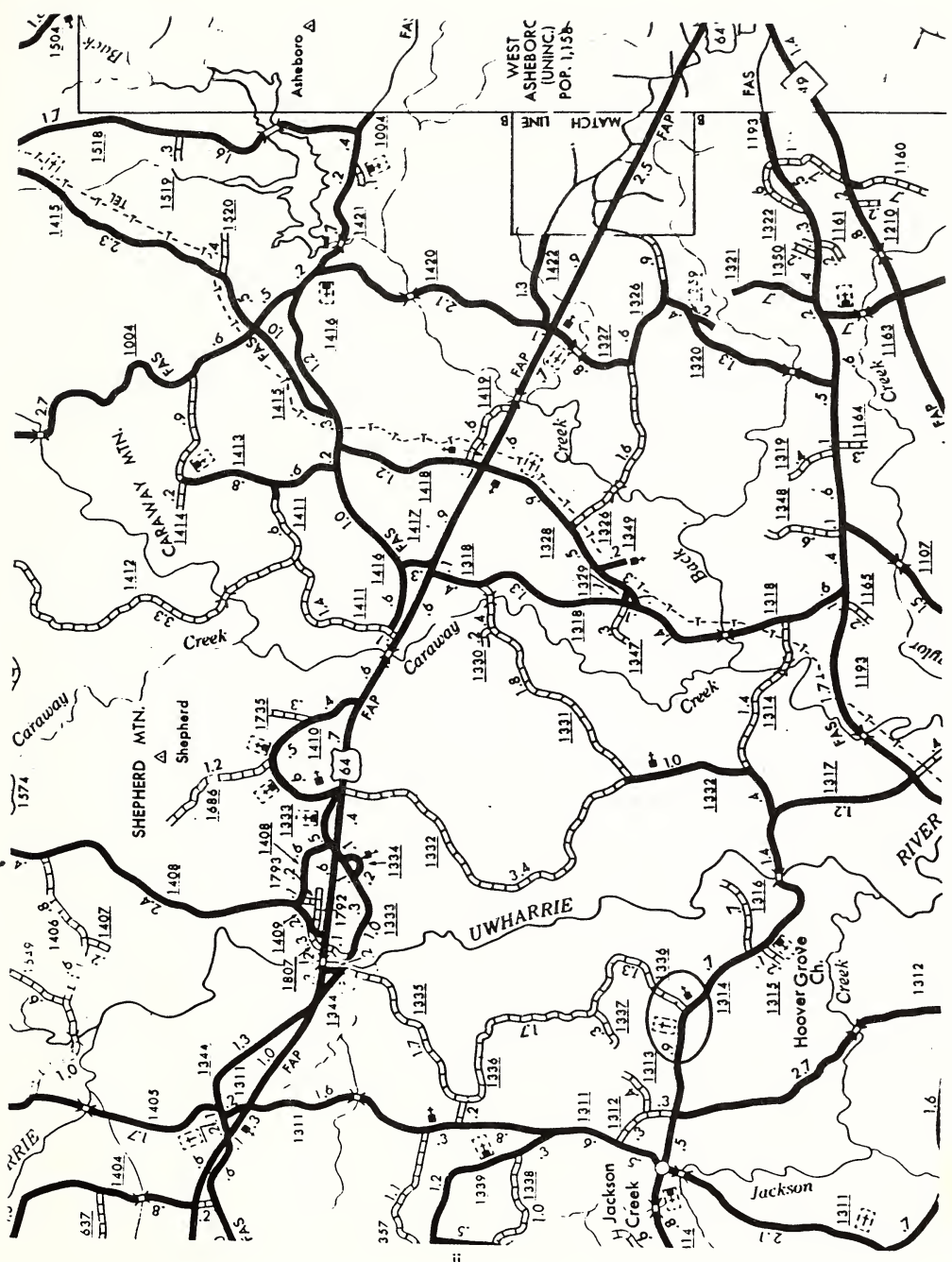
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1890 - 1990

Route 2, Box 378
Denton, North Carolina 27239

Jackson Creek Community





Introduction

For at least one hundred years now, folks have been gathering at the foot of Dutchman's Mountain to worship their Lord, witness marriages and bury their loved ones. Church services here have provided encouragement to the weary, fellowship to the lonely and uplifting to Christian and community spirit.

This book is an attempt to retrace the history of Pleasant Union United Church of Christ, established here as a Christian Church in 1890. This is by no means a meticulously complete account, but thanks to diligent church secretaries down through the years and memories of older members, the gaps are very few. Certainly, the addition of any names and facts are welcomed.

It is hoped that the information provided here will elicit special memories for older members, be a source of historical information for younger ones and be an incentive for everyone to record the happenings of the present for future generations.

Sharon Ridge Hughes
August, 1990

*This book is dedicated to
Leah Caroline Hughes,
and her generation
that it might serve as
a link to part of their past.*

The Setting

The area surrounding Pleasant Union was settled in the 1700's by mostly English and German families. From the beginning the land has been used for agricultural purposes. The Uwharrie River and one of its tributaries, Jackson Creek, made it possible for several grist and sawmills to be established, but no large industries were started here.¹

This area was included in the County of Randolph when its lines were drawn in 1779, and became a part of Concord Township when the county was subdivided in 1868.²

A major influence on the area in the 1800's was of course, the Civil War. Although no major battles took place nearby, "the frequent skirmishes between pro-Confederate and pro-Union sympathizers left much of Randolph County devastated. The economy was in shambles."³

In his book, History of Piney Grove Church, author Dwight Morgan describes the community after the war:

In the late 1860's, people who lived near Jackson Creek were diligently working to overcome the hardships and suffering caused by the Civil War. They were busy clearing new grounds that would provide fresh and richer soil from which more and better grain could be produced (commercial fertilizer was not available). They were busy splitting rails to build fences around the new grounds so the crops would be protected from the roaming cattle (no stock law existed). They were busy repairing their houses, barns, granaries and other outbuildings which had deteriorated while the men were away at war. They were anxious to increase the meager number of remaining cattle and swine which had been depleted to feed the Southern Army. They were constantly seeking through prayer and faith to overcome their mental anguish and learn to live without their loved ones who were lost in battle.

There was much to do and little with which to do it. Many of the able-bodied men who fought in the war had died and there was a manpower shortage. The better horses and mules had been sequestered by the army and the small numbers remaining were insufficient to properly till the soil and harvest the crops. Heavy industry, though limited, had concentrated on combat material during the war and there was a shortage of implements and tools with which to farm. The surviving soldiers who returned to this community found scarcity and hardship facing them and their neighbors....⁴

Early Meetings

For one hundred years now, this site has been a meeting place for the Christian Church (now called United Church of Christ). But it is apparent that ceremonies of some sort have occurred here probably since the early 1800's. The earliest ledgeable date in the cemetery is 1851, but the unmarked slate and stone markers were certainly placed there years before that date.

The earliest records we have of this site being used for worship is a deed written in 1878. On December 14 of that year, Alson Y. Hoover (1837-1900) and his wife, Mary Ann Nance Hoover (1843-1933) deeded two acres of land to trustees of the Methodist Protestant Union Church "*for the purpose of worship of Allmity God and burying ground or graveyard for the dead of the neighborhood.*"¹ The trustees named in the deed were Pennel Ridge, J. T. Brookshier, Henry Brookshier, R. I. Bell and J. H. Johnson. The deed, which was conveyed "*in consideration of the sum of seven dollars in hand*" had to be "acknowledged" by a Justice of the Peace in 1879 and "approved to be in due form" by a Clerk of Court in July 1880 before being recorded in the Randolph County Deed Book #42, page 196 on August 27, 1880.² We have no records of the Methodist Church activities in the years that followed.

Heretofore, it has been believed that Pleasant Union began as a Christian Church in 1890 with only ten members and E. H. Jarrell as Pastor. However upon close examination of church records, it is clear that Noah L. Yates (1842-1921), in stately script, entered three pages of information in a ledger book on or about August 23, 1890. The first describes the 150 page ledger as "*The Church Book of Pleasant Union Christian Church*" and lists the five Cardinal principles (of the Christian Church):

- 1 *The Lord Jesus is the only Head of the Church*
- 2 *The name Christian to the exclusion of all party or sectarian names*
- 3 *The Holy Bible or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament sufficient rule of faith and practice*
- 4 *Christian character or vital piety the only test of fellowship or membership*
- 5 *The right of private judgement and liberty of conscience the privilege and duty of all.*³

This Indenture made this the 14th day of December A.D. one thousand eight hundred and seventy eight Between Alson Hoover and his wife Mary Ann Hoover of the first part of the County of Randolph Tennessee and the State of North Carolina and Pennel Ridge J. T. Brookshire Henry Brookshire W. S. Bell and J. W. Johnson Trustees in Trust of the Union Church for the purpose herein mentioned, all of the County and State afore said of the other part, Witnesseth that for and in consideration of the sum of Seven dollars in hand paid to the said Alson Hoover and Mary Ann Hoover his wife at and both the sealing and delivery these presents the receipt whereof

Alson Hoover & wife
To
Union Church
Trustees
Deed

Recorded in Book
42 of Deeds page
196 Aug. 27 1880
R. H. Hargis
Reg. of Deeds

Deed of two acres from Alson and Mary Ann Hoover to trustees of the Methodist Protestant Union Church, 1878.

The second page is headed "Names of Members" and lists twelve "males" and twenty-one "females" in his handwriting (it is believed that four names at the bottom of the list in different handwriting were members added to the roll at a later time). So apparently, there were thirty-three original members of Pleasant Union. They are listed as follows:

<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
N. L. Yates	Mary McDowell
K. R. Bell	Lovenia McDowell
R. W. Lee	Margaret Bell
Levi McDowell	Lis an Yates
J. R. McDowell	Tobitha Yates
P. R. Yates	Mary A. Hammond
N. H. Yates	Martisha McDowell
James Griffin	Isabella McDowell
William Tysinger	Mary G. Yates
W. H. Yates	Alice H. Yates
Augustie B. Griffin	Lenora Griffin
William Trotter	Mary J. Yates
	Nelia Lou Griffin
	Martha J. Yates
	Alma L. McDowell
	Amanda H. Tysinger
	Emma L. Griffin
	Frances L. Hammond
	Mary A. Hoover
	Mary M. McDowell
	Rebecca Yates

The third page entered by Noah Yates states that "*Pleasant Union Christian Church was organized by E. H. Jarrell August 23, 1890*" and lists the officers elected that day:⁵

Deacons - N. L. Yates, K. R. Bell

Secretary - N. L. Yates

Sexton - R. W. Lee

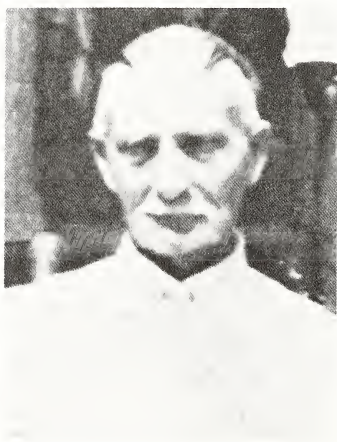
Collectors - Levi McDowell, Mary McDowell, J. R. McDowell, Lovenia McDowell, Margaret Bell, Tobitha Yates, Mary Hammond

It is explained later in the records that several collectors were used to solicit the various church funds. One or two persons would be elected to collect money for each of the following; 1) pastors salary 2) home missions 3) foreign missions 4) other conference funds.⁶

The ten members listed above were once thought to be the only charter members because of ambiguous wording in the text, but it does appear that these were officers elected by the larger group of thirty-three.



Charter members, Levi and Mary Ann McDowell with three of their children.



Charter members J. R. and Louvenia McDowell.
J. R. was the son of Levi, pictured above.

Pictures taken from book, The McDowells of Northampton, Wake, Randolph, Guilford and Davidson Counties, L. Jerry McDowell, 1983.

The next entry in the ledger, also in Noah Yates' hand writing, was not until December of 1892 when he writes, "*the first quarterly meeting of the Deep River Conference met at Pleasant Union Randolph County on Saturday 2 o'clock before the 2nd Sunday in December 1892.*" He lists fourteen members as being present, all but one of whom can be found in the original member listing.⁷

There is no mention in these early writings as to what kind of structure was used to house the meetings. It is doubtful that any sort of permanent structure existed at that time. It was common those days for church gatherings to be held in brush arbors built by men of the church from local timber.

The brush arbors of those days varied in size and dimensions with a raised platform at the front to serve as a pulpit while logs hewn on topside were normally used as seats. Leafy limbs and pine boughs were cut from trees and placed over the pulpit to provide shade and shelter for the preacher. The audience usually sat in the open. The more sophisticated brush arbors would be completely covered with boughs and limbs while stakes or panels would be placed outside and around the structure to keep out the roving stock⁸ (no stock law existed).⁹ It was not uncommon when outdoor services were being held for wandering stock to come by and gaze upon the assembled group conducting worship with prayer and song.¹⁰

Although there is no indication of an exact date, the first church structure was probably built on this site during the 1890's. It was most likely after 1894, when three trustees were elected to secure a deed for the two-acre tract originally deeded to the Methodist organization. On February 20, 1894, Noah L. Yates, P. R. Yates and W. H. Yates were elected trustees¹¹ and on that same date for eight dollars received a deed for the two acres "*to the use of the ministers and members of the Christian Church for the worship of God.*"¹² The deed was approved by a Clerk of Court and recorded by the Randolph County Register of Deeds on September 30, 1896 in Book 87, page 190.¹³

We know the first building existed in the latter 1890's because quarterly meeting minutes from February 25, 1899 list the following church expenditures:¹⁴

<i>for (ceiling)</i>	\$10.00
<i>one stove</i>	4.18
<i>lamp globe and nails</i>	.50
<i>one lamp</i>	3.00

Ira McDowell remembers this first structure being located just north of where the picnic tables now stand. His first recollection of it was when, at the age of 4, he attended the funeral of his grandfather Jeremiah McDowell in June, 1909. He rode the two-horse wagon which transported the coffin from the homeplace to the church. He remembers it being a small one-room structure which was boarded up and down around the outside walls. Also around 1911 he attended the subscription school which was held there.

State of North Carolina
Randolph County

This Deed made this the 20th day
of July in the year A.D. one thousand
Eight Hundred and ninety four N. F. May
and W. F. Self and B. F. Surratt of
Randolph County

relatives of the first part, and N. F. Yeates
- Levi, J. H. Surratt & P. R. Yeates Trustees
in office for the Christian Church
of Randolph County, and State of
North Carolina,

of the second part.

Witnesseth that the said parties of the first
part in consideration of the Sum of Eight
Dollars to them paid by the said
Trustees the receipt of which is hereby
acknowledged, have bargained and sold
and by these presents doth bargain sell
and convey to the said Trustees in office
for the Christian Church, for the use
of the Trustees and members of said
Church all the right title interest and
estate of the parties of the first part in
and to a tract or parcel of land in Rand
olph County & State aforesaid adjoining
the land of P. R. Yeates & R. R. Bell
others on the waters of Camp Branch
bounded as follows Beginning

The minutes from the early meetings of Pleasant Union, though sketchy, are quite interesting to read. Some of the more intriguing entries include:

- Names of members who had "gone astray" were often brought before the group for discussion. In April of 1900, secretary W. R. Harris wrote: *"moved that some of the Church see (a stray member) and talk to him about the way he is living and report to the church."*¹⁶ Evidently this strategy worked, because at another meeting later that year, the stray member *"acknowledge to his misdeeds and was sary (sorry) of it....the church received him back in full fellowship."*¹⁷ The strategy didn't work EVERY time, however, as in 1893 when one delinquent member's name was *"erased off the Church book"*¹⁸ and another *"suspended"* in 1899.¹⁹
- The winter of 1899 must have been a rough one as minutes from a February meeting include, *"trasures report that trasure has nothing on hand."*²⁰
- In that same year the pastor was paid \$4.40 during the second quarter.²¹
- Times must have been lean in 1905 also, when at a July meeting, *"collectors report nothing"*.²²
- An entry on the book's inside cover reads *"value of church property for 1906 - \$250.00."*
- When by September of 1922 the missions collectors had garnered only 90¢, they *"made a law that each member pay 25¢ a year on missions."*²³
- The spelling for the last name "Yates" is used interchangeably with "Yeats" and "Yeates" even when referring to the same person.

The original ledger book was photocopied in 1979 and then sent to the History Room in the library at Elon College for safekeeping. However, it has been returned to us for viewing during our centennial celebration.

¹ Deed, Randolph County. Book 42, page 196.

² Ibid.

³ Church minutes, August 23, 1890.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Church minutes, February 25, 1899 and January 27, 1900.

⁷ Church minutes, December 1892.

⁸ History of Piney Grove Church, Dwight Morgan, 1973, page 3.

⁹ Ibid., page 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., page 3.

¹¹ Church minutes, February 20, 1894.

¹² Deed, Randolph County, Book 87, page 190.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Church minutes, February 25, 1899.

¹⁵ From conversation with Ira L. McDowell.

¹⁶ Church minutes, April 28, 1900.

¹⁷ Church minutes, Sept. 28, 1900.

¹⁸ Church minutes, Oct. 6, 1893.

¹⁹ Church minutes, April 29, 1899.

²⁰ Church minutes, Feb. 25, 1899.

²¹ Church minutes, April, 29, 1899.

²² Church minutes, July 8, 1905.

²³ Church minutes, Sept. 30, 1922.

Subscription Schooling at Pleasant Union

In the early 1800's, there was no organized educational system in North Carolina. Some parents and others interested in education supported private schools, many of which met in church facilities or meeting houses for two to three months in winter. Books and teachers who were paid only by parental contributions, were in short supply. ¹ Textbooks usually included only a spelling book and the Bible. ² These private schools were few and (in light of transportation of the day) very far in between. In his book Reminiscences of Randolph, published in 1890, J. A. Blair describes education in our county in the nineteenth century:

The only educational facilities afforded the masses occurred when by chance some old schoolmaster came along and got up a short subscription school during the winter in some old untenanted dwelling house, and these simple primitive institutions could only find support in the more densely settled communities, and in the sparsely inhabited sections of the county the children never saw a school house. ³

Then in 1839, the North Carolina General Assembly, having received one million dollars from the National Treasury for a literary fund, passed the Public School Law. This legislation directed each county to be divided into school districts and to "call an election and ascertain whether or not the people wanted free schools." ⁴ On August 8, 1839, Randolph County voted in favor of the proposal, and the first "Common Schools" opened their doors in the fall of 1840. ⁵ However, there were none in our immediate area at that time. The newly created school systems were slow to develop due to a lack of leadership, supplies, teachers and funds. ⁶ The problems were amplified in the 1860's, as the Civil War consumed everyone's time, energy and resources.

It was not until the late 1800's that organized schools appeared in our area. One of the first was Northbend School located just south of Jackson Creek. During the 1870's, the Piney Grove School was built just southeast of Piney Grove Church. ⁷ Then in the later 1870's or 1880's (exact date not known), Redberry School was built at the foot of Dutchman's mountain (just southwest of where Winsi McDowell now lives). It served the families of our area until the 1930's when it was consolidated with Farmer School. ⁸ The Redberry School bell was donated to Pleasant Union by Everette Morris and now sits atop our church sign on the front lawn.

All these schools were confronted with funding problems as public monies were still inadequate. So they operated for a time as "subscription schools," each child paying a tuition to help meet expenses. The schools operated for only four to six months a year, teaching reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling. ⁹

During the summer months, additional subscription schools were sometimes organized for the younger children. Around 1911, one such school was operated here at Pleasant Union. The first church building was in use at that time, located

north of where the picnic tables now stand. Ira McDowell, now 85, remembers attending the subscription school and paying a fee of 3 cents per day. There were eight to fifteen young children from the community enrolled. Fifteen-year-old Lena McDowell was the teacher, having studied at Farmer School one year past her education at Redberry.¹⁰

The subscription school was held here for only a short time. Lena later married Samuel Ashley Trotter who left her a widow at age twenty-one. She, with young son Ashley, then lived with her brother, Aubey McDowell, in his house directly across the road from the present church site. She was a faithful member here until her death in 1959.¹¹

¹ Randolph County, 1779-1979, Randolph County Historical Society and Randolph Arts Guild, 1979, page 56.

² Reminiscences of Randolph County, J. A. Blair, Reece S. Elam, 1890 (Reprinted by Randolph County Historical Society, 1968), page 30.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ White Plains Friends Meeting 1850-1982, Frederick R. Crownfield et al. The North Carolina Friends Historical Society, 1983, page 116.

⁷ Farmer; Yesterday and Today, edited by Zeb R. Denny, Wooten Publishing Company., Inc, 1983, page 78.

⁸ Ibid., page 83.

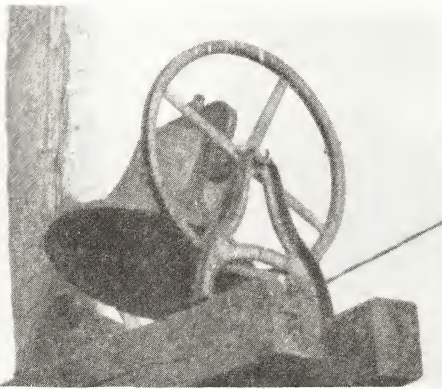
⁹ Ibid., page 78.

¹⁰ from conversation with Ira McDowell.

¹¹ from conversation with Mattie Mae Swaney.



The Redberry School



Bell from Redberry now hangs at Pleasant Union



**Lena McDowell in 1911
around time of subscription
school**



**Lena McDowell Trotter in later years with her
son Ashley and his family, wife Zeola at left,
daughter Linda at right and Mary Ellen,
foreground (son, Jerry Don, not pictured).**

The Second Church Building

Several present members at Pleasant Union remember attending the second church building as children. It was located just west of where the picnic tables stand, at the northeast corner of the cemetery. There is no indication in the church records as to when it was built, but it most likely occurred in the later teens or early 1920's. Church minutes are very limited for this time period. In fact, there is no entry in the ledger book from May 30, 1908 until June 22, 1918, when it states that

*"Pleasant Union Christian Church was reorganized June 22, 1918 according to the government and principles of the Christian Church by Rev. G. R. Underwood, an elder in the western N. C. Christian conference."*¹

This entry is followed by a list of twenty-two members headed by the same three trustees which were elected in 1894, N. L., W. H. and P. R. Yates.²

1918 Membership List

N. L. Yates - trustee	Vircha Trotter	Rebecah Yeates
W. H. Yates - trustee	Lou Swaney	Allice Griffin
P. R. Yates - trustee	J. A. Yeates	J. R. McDowell
K. R. Bell	A. J. Trotter	Lo venia McDowell
Jones Griffin	E. M. Yeates	Cora Morris
Norah Yeates	Jennie Lee	Allice McDowell
Nellie Trotter	Uda Johnson	A. V. McDowell
Thomas Harris		

We have evidence that considerable work was done on the church in 1923 as \$72.00 was "collected for roof repair."³ Then in 1925, Alexander McDowell was appointed to "look after" and sell the "surplus lumber of repairs."⁴

We have an excellent idea of what the second church looked like thanks to the handiwork of the late John Henry Ferree. Mr. Ferree attended Pleasant Union in the 1920's and later constructed a replica of the one-room structure for his son, Kenneth, who served as our pastor in the 1960's.⁵ The wooden replica sports a tin roof penetrated in the center by a single chimney. It has five windows, a double door at the front and sits atop a stacked rock foundation. Mr. Ferree also fashioned a pulpit, complete with a tiny wooden Bible, which can be disassembled to fit into the front doors. Hazel Hammond McDowell has an early 1920's photograph which shows the back portion of the church, the details of which closely resemble the replica.

Clay Yates remembers Allena Johnson McDowell (first wife of Artley McDowell) playing the organ in the second church. He also remembers learning music there from Howard Hunt, a music teacher, who would occasionally hold classes in the structure. Alvin McDowell can recall from childhood that the wooden floor had cracks between the boards wide enough to spit tobacco through, a feature of which certain church-goers were prone to take advantage. Marinda Harris Yates attended the church with her family and became a member during the years services were held there. She is the only living member to have done so.

Although Sunday School has probably been held at Pleasant Union since its beginning (Ira McDowell can remember attending Sunday School at the original church and we have Sunday School lesson cards dating back to 1913), the earliest attendance records we can find are from 1928, during the time the second church was in use. On August 26, 1928, the number on roll was 37 and the officers and teachers were listed as follows:⁶

Superintendent - E. L. McDowell

Assistants - Mrs. B. M. Morris, Mrs. A. R. McDowell

Secretary - Everett Morris

Assistant - Dallas McDowell

Bible Class Teacher - Mrs. A. R. McDowell

Assistant - A. V. McDowell

Junior Class Teacher - Mrs. B. M. Morris

Assistant - Mrs. M. Lackey

3rd Class Teacher - Miss Exie McDowell

Assistant - Miss Grace Bolton

Exie McDowell Snider taught the children's Sunday School class for several years. She remembers the church having trouble paying for the literature. She asked the children in her class to bring one penny every Sunday to help pay for the materials. This idea caught on and soon each class began taking up a collection. Sunday School collections from the latter 1920's averaged just under \$2.00. Literature at that time cost \$1.41 per week.⁷

¹ Church minutes, June 22, 1918.

² Ibid.

³ Church minutes, Sept. 1, 1923.

⁴ Church minutes, July 4, 1925.

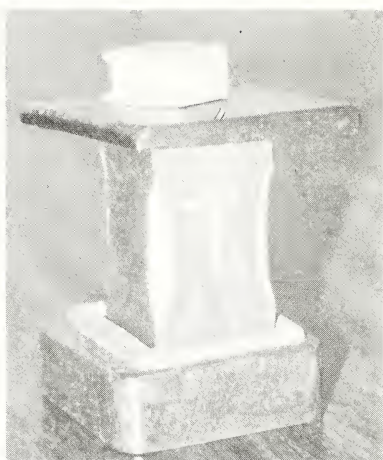
⁵ from conversation with Allene Ferree.

⁶ Sunday School Record, August 26, 1928.

⁷ Ibid.



Replica of second church built
by John Henry Ferree



Pulpit for the replica
including tiny wooden Bible



1920's photograph showing back portion of second church. Children are Hazel Hammond (left) and sister, Matalain.

Familiar faces around time of Second Church



Community members often walked to church when weather permitted. Eli Linville (Miney) McDowell (1880-1936) and his wife, Martha Pierce McDowell (1887-1974), Bibles in hand, walk to Pleasant Union. Five of their eleven children currently attend this church (Ira, Alvin, Exie (Snider), Vida (Swaney) and Imogene (Ridge).



Alexander R. Hammond (1861-1950) with granddaughter Gerrelene McDowell (daughter of Hazel Hammond McDowell)



Sallie Hammond McDowell (1864-1930), wife of William McDowell. She was the mother of Lena (Trotter), Artley and Aubey McDowell.

The "High" Church

Church minutes from 1933 state that members voted to "*remodel the church.*"¹ That decision somehow evolved into the construction of a new church building in 1934, located just west of where the present church stands. It seemed a bit curious to the author that a community would undertake building a new church in the midst of the Great Depression. But thanks to the generosity and hard work of several church members, they managed to get it done. One member in particular stands out. The late Arthur Harris (father of Marinda Harris Yates), a deacon and sawmiller by trade, cut and sawed lumber needed for construction and hauled it to the site. Then several church men donated their time and tools to build the structure under the direction of Elzie Lambeth, a builder from the Cid Community. There is no record of actual construction cost, but in October of 1934 an unpaid balance of \$21.13 is mentioned in the church minutes.² In March, 1935 "*debt was given at around \$34.00.*"³ Then in October, 1935, secretary Allena Johnson McDowell wrote "*The church is cleared of indebttness.*"⁴

Many refer to Pleasant Union's third church as the "*high*" church because of the steep-pitched roof. Its height allowed for a balcony at the back of the church which could be closed off for Sunday School rooms or opened to the sanctuary for crowded services. Two other Sunday School rooms and a foyer were added to the church in 1947 by Artley R. McDowell, (1893-1972), a church member and carpenter.

The sanctuary was heated with two wood stoves, one on each side, with long stove pipes leading to the outside. One pipe extended about twenty feet on the inside toward the choir pews at the front to help distribute the heat. It was suspended from the ceiling with wire. When the Sunday School rooms were added, they were each equipped with wood stoves as well.⁵

Men from the congregation, several of whom ran sawmills, would supply wood for the fires. They would meet in the fall to cut, split and stack a good amount and then supplement with slabs from the sawmill when needed throughout the winter. Members who lived close by would take turns starting the fires early on Sunday mornings so the church would be warm by Sunday School time.⁶

Richard Fields remembers starting the fires one Sunday morning around 1960. He had just gotten the fires started in the sanctuary when the long stovepipe leading to the choir fell to the floor, sending soot and smoke everywhere. Fearing the church might catch on fire, he ran for help. When he returned with his son, Gary, and Baxter Swaney, the fire in the stove had died down. They repaired the pipe, cleaned the sanctuary, returned home to dress and made it back in time for Sunday School.

Pauline Winslow remembers one pipe becoming blocked during a service one Sunday, sending smoke billowing into the church. She says folks started fanning and the windows were raised, but the service never slowed down!

There was no running water in the "high" church. A "johnny house" located north of the church near the woods was the only toilet facility. When water was needed, it was carried from Aubey McDowell's well, located at his home directly across the road. After church was adjourned, it was common for men to gather at the well for a drink from the dipper and to discuss the latest news, weather and conditions of their crops and livestock.

¹ Church minutes, Oct. 8, 1933.

² Church minutes, Oct. 13, 1934.

³ Church minutes, Mar. 9, 1935.

⁴ Church minutes, Oct. 12, 1935.

⁵ from conversation with Laymens Fellowship.

⁶ Ibid.



Third church at Pleasant Union, 1934-1963. Photographer was standing at the eastern edge of cemetery looking east.



In the 1950's, large crowds attended Sunday School and preaching.



Back of the church as seen from public road. Three-sided structure on the back was recessed pulpit area.



Arthur Harris and wife Ina Yates Harris. He contributed much of the construction materials needed to build the third church.



Aubey McDowell and wife Lennis Byerly McDowell. Their house was located across the road from the third church. They often started wood stove fires for winter services.



Present-laden Christmas tree in the third church. Long stovepipe constructed to distribute heat can be seen in photograph.



Mattie Mae McDowell (Swaney), daughter of Aubey and Lennis at well where church-goers came for water and conversation.

Gatherings



Bennie and Mae Lowdermilk

During the twenty-eight year tenure of pastor B. H. Lowdermilk, 1927-1955, the membership at Pleasant Union steadily increased, and church functions were very well attended. Sunday School records from 1945 show one hundred names on the roll. Officers and teachers at that time are listed as follows:¹

Superintendent - Lewis Trotter

Secretary - Mattie Mae McDowell

Class #1 teacher - Dallas McDowell (32 pupils)

Class #2 teacher - Ira McDowell (23 pupils)

Class #3 teacher - Alvin McDowell (13 pupils)

Class #4 teacher - Vida McDowell (32 pupils)

It was common during the 1940's and early 1950's to have two all-day services per year. The first, usually the second Sunday in May, was a combined observance of Mother's Day and Memorial Day. Starting in the morning and lasting until evening, different speakers would deliver messages throughout the day. There would be special singing, children would render speeches and part of the ceremony would be held in the cemetery. Of course, around lunch time, "dinner" would be spread over the long picnic table for everyone to enjoy.



**Mattie Poole Trotter, left (1880-1962), and
Lundia Welch Hammond, right (1887-1964),
enjoying 1950's Mother's Day picnic.**

The second all-day service of the year was Revival, usually held on the fourth Sunday in July. This occasion was taken very seriously by church members. A guest evangelist would be secured months in advance and folks would come from miles around to participate.

Although everyone drove cars to church by the 1940's, Berry Voncannon (1895-1966) would hitch up his two-horse wagon to come to Revival. He lived where McDowell Lumber is now located on old Highway 49. Starting from there, he would pick up church-goers along the way. The wagon load would arrive at church enthusiastically singing hymns.²

Alvin McDowell recalls that several men, including his father, would meet at the church before the meeting started. The group would go out into the woods and loudly pray for a successful revival.

These meetings were not short on enthusiasm. Many present members can recall loud rejoicing and testimonials during the services. They remember Deaconess Cora Morris shouting praises and the excitement of Billie McLeod, who would jump from his seat exclaiming that he was "happy as a bumblebee!"³

Most Revivals during this era were regarded as successful, two particularly so. One was held toward the end of an especially hot and dry July. Allene Loflin McDowell recalls that Eli (Miney) McDowell prayed for rain during one of the services and sure enough, rain fell that afternoon.

Probably Pleasant Union's most successful Revival to date was held during the summer of 1949. Elgin E. Doby from Thomasville was the visiting evangelist. According to Clarence Snider, those that came forward to accept Christ during the service numbered into the teens. Many of those converted later joined our church.

It was customary for Baptisms to be conducted at some point after Revival. Two places frequented for emersion were the Uwharrie River at Vic Parker's Mill (present location of Lake Reece Dam) and a spot in Jackson Creek on Dallas McDowell's farm. The pond on Alvin McDowell's farm was used on one occasion. Church members would congregate around the bank to watch the ceremony and sing hymns.



Although the participants of this Baptism in 1955 are not from Pleasant Union, the scene is typical of the ceremonies held by our church during that time. To far left is Rev. Kenneth Ferree, who served our church in the 1960's.

Certainly a highlight of the all-day services was gathering around the picnic tables at noon to enjoy "*dinner on the ground.*" Picnic tables of some sort have been located under the same two oak trees since anyone can remember. They were constructed from wood for many years, which of course had to be replaced from time to time. Around 1960, the wooden tables were replaced with closely woven wire stretched between supports. Then in the later 1960's permanent tables were constructed from concrete slabs. In recent years, the air conditioned, insect-free environment of the fellowship hall has lured us indoors for dinner. But the shaded tables remind us of a simpler time when the flies were forgotten in the fellowship, and the heat only made the lemonade taste sweeter.

¹ Sunday School records, April, 1945.

² from conversation with Pauline Winslow.

³ from conversation with Laymen's Fellowship.



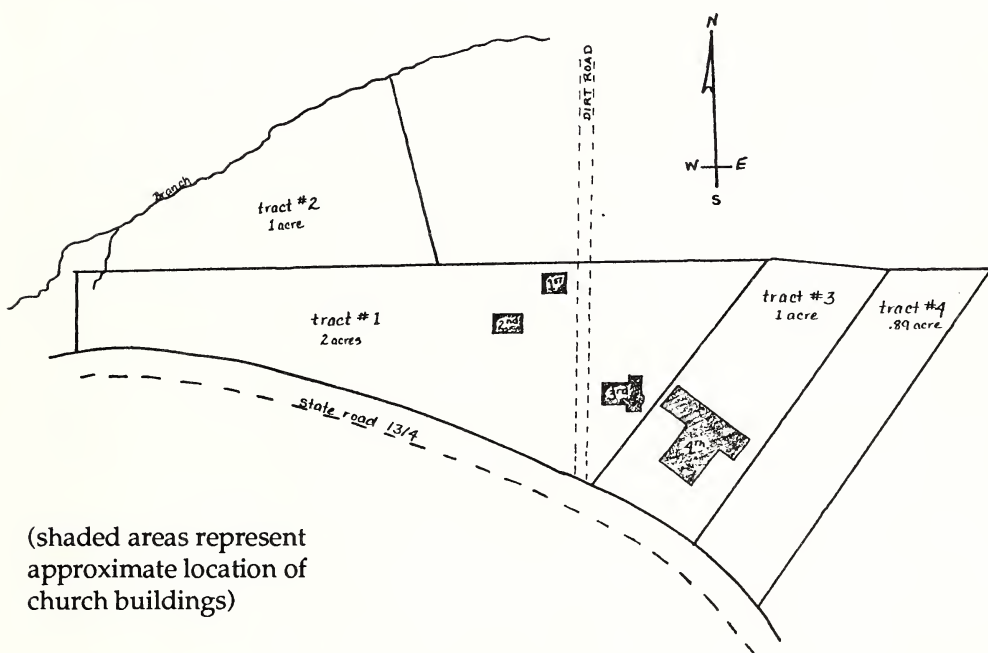
1955 photograph shows long wooden picnic table in background.

Food-laden table during a 1950's Mother's Day Picnic. Note water barrel at the end.



Permanent tables were constructed from cement slabs in the 1960's.

Pleasant Union Land Acquisitions



Present property owned by Pleasant Union was obtained in four different tracts:

- Tract #1: Originally deeded from Alson and Mary Hoover to Methodist Church, December 14, 1878 (Deed Book #42, page 196), then acquired by Pleasant Union February 20, 1894 (Deed Book #87, page 190).
- Tract #2: From E. M. McDowell and wife Mattie McDowell to Pleasant Union December 22, 1937 (Deed Book #623, page 305).
- Tract #3: From Ashley Trotter and wife Zeola Trotter to Pleasant Union March 31, 1962 (Deed Book #804, page 188 and later corrected in Deed Book #852, page 303).
- Tract #4: From H. Leaton Delk and wife Barbara Delk to Pleasant Union (Deed Book #1032, page 237).

The Brick Church

A building fund was initiated at Pleasant Union in 1955 with Dallas McDowell as Treasurer. By March of 1962 it had grown to over \$15,000.00 and at the quarterly meeting on March 10, secretary Ruth McDowell writes, *"The group at this meeting would like to go on record favoring the starting of a new church here as soon as possible and recommend same to the building committee."*¹

The building committee members were Dannie Garner, Chairman; Ashley Trotter, Clarence Snider, Dallas McDowell, Clay Yates, Richard Fields and Ira McDowell.²

An additional acre of land west of the third church was acquired from Ashley and Zeola Trotter on March 31, 1962 to use as the new building site.³ Construction was started in 1963 by S. E. Trogdon Construction Company and was completed by December of that year. Allene Loflin McDowell recorded these "firsts" that occurred in our new church during the next few years:

December 8, 1963 - first service in new church held in the large room behind the pulpit with 125 present. First prayer offered by Cletus Swaney. Special music by *"the Girls."* Superintendent was Clay Yates.

First sermon was delivered by our pastor, Kenneth Ferree, at 7:00 pm that evening.

December 29, 1963 - first 11:00 am service by Rev. Kenneth Ferree.

January 26, 1964 - first service held in sanctuary with new church pews in place. 100 were present for Sunday School.

February 2, 1964 - Young People's Group presented church with a new pulpit Bible.

February 29, 1964 - first funeral in new church for Aubey McDowell.

March 8, 1964 - first flower arrangement presented by Ruby Fields.

March, 1964 - Loan from Randolph Savings and Loan quoted as \$17,000.00. Assumed payments of \$185.00 / month.

March 26, 1964 - first communion service in new church

August 30, 1964 - Consecration Service with the following special guests:

Dr. Clyde Fields, Superintendent, Southern Convention

Rev. Avery Brown, Conference President

Rev. Lacy Presnell, Conference Pastor-At-Large

Dr. Fields delivered the keynote address, *"The Meaning of the Church."*

November, 1964 - the Western North Carolina Convention met here.

August 29, 1965 - first Baptism service in new church. Rev. Kenneth Ferree was assisted by Clarence Snider. Three were baptised by "*pouring*," Ashley Trotter, Linda Trotter and Jane Yates.

November 27, 1965 - first wedding in new church. Linda Trotter married Paul Younts.

Donations to the building fund for the new church were organized into a five-year building plan. Weekly donations over the period culminated in the purchase of part of the building which could be given in honor or memory of someone.

For example, Mr. and Mrs. Gurney Davis pledged to donate \$1.00 per week for five years toward the purchase of two church pews in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Noah Yates. The pledge cards, all of which are marked "*paid in full*" were kept as a permanent record of the church.

At a quarterly meeting in March of 1971, Building Fund Treasurer Dallas McDowell reported that the new church debt had been paid in full.⁴

¹ Church minutes, March 10, 1962.

² Building committee meeting, January 20, 1971.

³ Deed, Randolph County, Book #804, page 188.

⁴ Church minutes, March, 1971.

PLEASANT UNION
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
5 YEAR BUILDING PLAN
MEMORIALS AND DEDICATIONS

		PER WEEK
1 - Large Assembly Room	1,500 00	6 00
1 - Sanctuary Overhead	1,500 00	6 00
1 - Floor	1,500 00	6 00
1 - Painting	1,300 00	5 00
1 - Tile Floor	1,000 00	4 00
1 - Wiring	1,000 00	4 00
1 - Heating Plant	1,000 00	4 00
8 - Sunday School Rooms	650 00	2 50
1 - Roof	500 00	2 00
1 - Steeple	300 00	1 25
1 - Chairs for Choir	300 00	1 25
1 - Pulpit Furniture	300 00	1 25
6 - Sanctuary Arches	260 00	1 00
32 - Pews	125 00	50
1 - Light Fixture	100 00	40
1 - Glass Front	100 00	40
2 - Folding Doors	50 00	20
35 - Brick 1000	38 00	15
35 - Windows	30 00	15
2 - Front Doors	25 00	10
40- Blocks 100	20 00	10
20 - Doors	10 00	05

Five-year building plan
organized donations for
new church. Example of
pledge card at right.

No

1

PLEASANT UNION
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
5 YEAR BUILDING PLAN

TO SHOW MY FAITH IN GOD AND BY HIS HELP, I WISH MY
NAME AND INTENTIONS ENTERED IN THE CHURCH MINUTES
AS A PERMANENT RECORD

THEY BEING \$ 1,500.00 *paid in full*

EQUAL TO Floor

Memorial

I PLAN TO PAY

WEEKLY \$ 6.00

MONTHLY \$ _____

QUARTERLY \$ _____

YEARLY \$ _____

UNTIL FULL AMOUNT IS PAID

STARTING DATE Oct. 6 - 1903

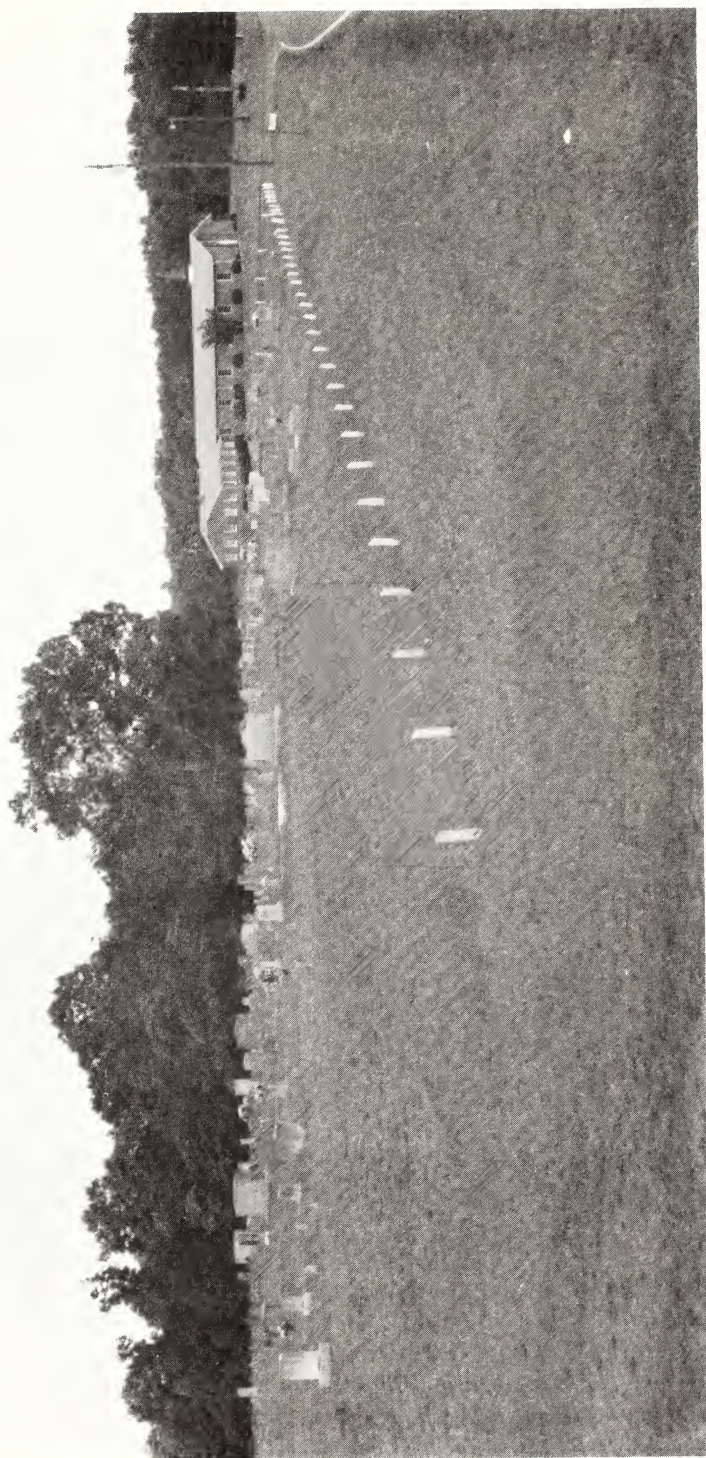
AMOUNT PAID THIS DATE \$ none

SIGNED Ray Yates

STREET or ROUTE Farmer Station

CITY and STATE Asheboro, N.C.

NAME Mr. & Mrs. J.M. Yates
(In Memory Of)



Pleasant Union Church and Cemetery, 1990

The Forked Locust



As you approach the Pleasant Union Church, our unique 25-foot signpost quickly catches the eye. In looking back, its origin is as interesting as its appearance.

The bell perched atop the structure once summoned children for study at "Redberry" a two-room school which operated at the foot of Dutchman's Mountain from the 1870's or 1880's (exact date unknown) until the 1930's.¹ Everette Morris, a deacon at Pleasant Union from 1948 to 1968, purchased the school building after its close and then donated the bell to the church.²

After construction of the present church was complete, Dallas McDowell, a farmer and saw miller, set out to find the perfect post to accommodate the bell and church sign for our entrance. In 1967, he found a forked wild locust tree (locust being a self-preserving wood) on the farm of Joshua Morgan, located near Piney Grove Church.³ Mrs. Morgan donated the tree for our use. Dallas cut it down and at his sawmill near his home, trimmed the bark and hewed the surface with a broadaxe so it would have the look of hand-hewn timbers of years past. Then with the help of several churchmen, it was erected on our front lawn in 1968 where it now summons Sunday School scholars every Sabbath.



Signpost with hand-hewn surface.

¹ Farmer: Yesterday and Today, edited by Zeb R. Denny, Wooten Printing Co., Inc., 1981, page 83.

² From conversation with Everette Morris.

³ Churchmen Fellowship Meeting Minutes, June, 1967.

1890 Recreated

Two of the most memorable occasions in Pleasant Union's history occurred during the Christmas seasons of 1966 and 1967. Church members and guests participated in detailed reenactments of turn-of-the-century Christmas celebrations. They arrived in horse-drawn buggies and wagons, or on horseback, wearing clothing typical of the period. The event, initiated by Ira McDowell and the Young People's group, was planned for only one year, but everyone had so much fun, it was planned again for the following year and became even bigger! It received widespread media coverage and estimates of attendance ranged from four to six hundred.

Christmas - 1890 - 1910

PLEASANT UNION CONGREGATIONAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(United Church of Christ)

Denton, North Carolina
Route 2

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 17, 1967

1:30 P. M.

Horses, Buggies, Wagons and Traditional Dress



A FRIENDLY WELCOME TO ALL

Rev. Kenneth Feree, Pastor, Route 1 - Seagrave, N. C.



Carroll Ridge arrived riding side-saddle wearing high button shoes.



Carrie Ridge came as "Miss Kitty" from Gunsmoke.



Richard Fields takes the reins as daughter Sheila and daughter-in-law Joyce huddle under a blanket.

Worshippers bring gifts to place under tree. (l to r) Lydia McDowell, Clarice McDowell, Joseph Trotter, Mary Bennett, Peggy Snider, Joann Ridge, Mrs. B. H. Lowdermilk.





**Ira McDowell in
high crowned hat.**



**Hitching post was constructed in back to
accommodate horses and wagons.**



**Once inside, early worship
service was recreated.**

... for the dead of the neighborhood

When Alson and Mary Hoover sold the original two-acre tract to the trustees of Union Church in 1878, it was for *"the purpose of worship of Allmity God and for burying grounds or graveyard for the dead of the neighborhood."* It is apparent that part of the land had been used for the latter purpose for many years previously. Having gravesites that probably date back to the early 1800's, ours is one of the older cemeteries in Randolph County.¹

Information about our cemetery is readily available thanks to the research of L. Jerry McDowell of Raleigh, a great, great grandson of Levi McDowell, one of Pleasant Union's charter members. He, along with brother H. Keith McDowell and father Harding A. McDowell, traced the genealogy of the McDowell families of Randolph and surrounding counties, which culminated into a book published in 1983. Our cemetery, known to some as the *"old McDowell cemetery,"* served as an excellent source of information for them. They listed all the tombstone inscriptions, added some of the genealogical information and published it as a separate work in 1980.

The following are interesting excerpts from the book, Cemetery Records:²

- In 1980 there were 289 graves with some form of identification and over 100 unidentified markers such as a stone, slate or brick. It is not clear whether these markers represented the head and foot, or were single markers for a grave. Most of these unidentified graves are located in the northwest portion of the cemetery.
- The marker with the earliest ledgeable date reads: *"Here lies the body of John Riley Hill, D.C. Sept. 1851."*
- John Riley's son, John Calvin Hill (1832-1915), is buried here along with his three wives, Julia Johnson, buried in 1857, Delinda Small, 1885, and Mary Ridge, 1937.
- Julia Ann Johnson Hill, mentioned above, has two markers in the cemetery, located some distance apart. The original marker spells her name *"Julian"* the second, *"Julia Ann."*
- Three other people also have double markers:
 - The original marker for *"Talitha Yates"* states that she *"dide March the 17, 1883."* The second marker spells her name *"Telitha"* and also mentions her husband *"Fedrik Yates."*
 - Lemuel Cisro McDowell (1880-1917) has two markers, one near the highway marked *"L. C. Mc"* and one near the center of the cemetery reading *"L. C. McDow."*

- Lemuel McDowell's wife, Annie Meredith Swaney McDowell (1886-1920) has one marker near her husband's and another nearby which is placed upside down in the ground!
- Sion Hill died "August" 24, 1877. Whoever scratched the inscription on his slate marker wrote the letters "Augu" on one line and "st" on the next.
- Some interesting printing appears scratched on slate in the oldest part of the cemetery such as "*2arah Hill*" and "*J.V. Mc*" (dates unknown).
- The ages of some folks are recorded to the exact day, such as Fannie Harris (1865-1901) who according to her marker, lived "*45y 2m 25dys.*" Others are not so exact, as that of A. C. Yates, a Confederate Army veteran who died in 1906. His stone gives his age at "*about 72 years.*"³

Scattered throughout the cemetery are many poignant reminders of infants and children who "*Budded on earth to bloom in Heaven.*" One can only imagine the untold stories which accompany each marker and the suffering each family must have endured. The plight of three families would seem especially touching:

- J. E. and Grace Yates lost twins in 1923, "*Francis*" and "*Everette.*"
- William and Sarah Hoover have two children buried near each other, both six years old, "*J. P. H. 1871-1877*" and "*S. J. H. 1873-1879.*"
- Andrew J. and Mary Hoover buried seven children around the turn of the century. Each has an identical diamond-shaped marker. Two read "*Clay*" and "*Colon*" and the other five, "*infant daughter.*"⁴

No discussion of the Pleasant Union Cemetery would be complete without mention of Artley McDowell. For years he assisted families in selecting a plot, digging the grave (by hand, of course) and then covering the grave after the funeral (others who helped with grave digging include Aubey McDowell, Everette McDowell, Rodney and Lewis Trotter, Robe Trotter and Turner Ridge).⁵ Artley is recognized in an April 1972 Trustee Report for having "*through his knowledge of the cemetery, done an outstanding job helping friends and neighbors in time of need.*"⁶ He died in December of that year and is buried between his first wife, Allena Johnson (1892-1943) and his second wife, Lydia Loflin Perdue (1903-1980), both of whom served Pleasant Union as faithfully as he did.



Artley and Lydia McDowell

A Cemetery Committee was formed in 1972 to handle cemetery affairs. First committee members were George Yates, Ashley Trotter and Ira McDowell, Chairman.⁷ Since that time, this committee has had the cemetery surveyed and plotted, set up regulations regarding its use, and started a fund for its upkeep, beautification and expansion.

Thanks to the work of these folks and many others who have contributed to the upkeep of our cemetery, it will remain a beautiful memorial to those who have passed and a source of historical information and inspiration to those of us still living. The tombstone of 38-year old Nancie Elmera Harris (1875-1914) offers us this sage advice"

*Desire not to live long but to live well
How long we live, not years but actions tell.
Good-bye*⁸

¹ Cemetery Records, Pleasant Union United Church of Christ, Larry Jerome McDowell, 1980.

² For more information about these books, contact L. Jerry McDowell, 6408 Dixon Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina 27609.

³ Cemetery Records,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ From conversation with Mattie Mae McDowell Swaney.

⁶ Trustee Report, 1972 by Ira McDowell.

⁷ Church minutes, April 1972.

⁸ Cemetery Records, page 9.



Pleasant Union Cemetery in 1990.



Northwest corner of the cemetery where the oldest markers are found. Dutchman's Mountain is in background.

Pleasant Union United Church of Christ

PASTORS

1890 - 1892	E. H. Jarrell
1892 - 1898	J. A. Webster
1898 - 1899	J. W. Parker
1899 - 1900	M. A. Baldwin
1900 - 1904	J. W. Parker
1904 - ?	J. A. Webster
1918 - 1921	G. R. Underwood
1921 - 1927	W. N. Hayes
1927 - 1955	B. H. Lowdermilk
1956 - 1959	W. T. Joyner
1959 - 1962	M. L. Fogleman
1963 - 1967	Kenneth C. Ferree
1969 - 1978	Roy C. Whisenhunt
1978 - 1979	W. R. (Andy) Anderson
1979 - 1984	Robert N. Hunsucker
1985 - present	Larry W. McEntire

Notable supply pastors serving our church were:

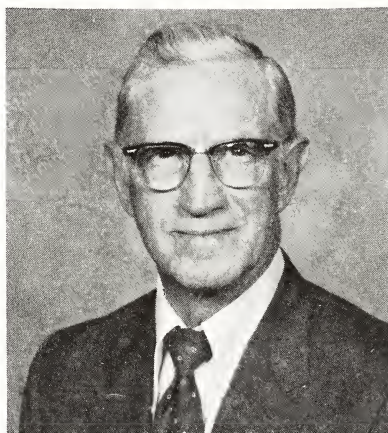
1959 - Carl Brady
1962 - Lewis Wicker
1984 - 1985 - Gary Benard



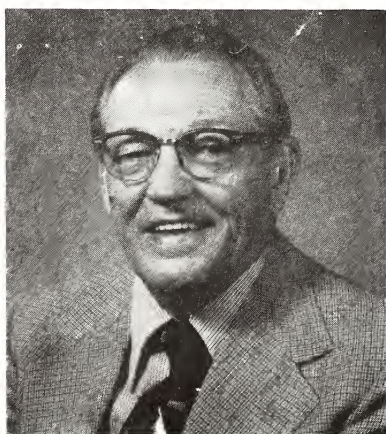
Rev. B. H. Lowdermilk
1927 - 1955



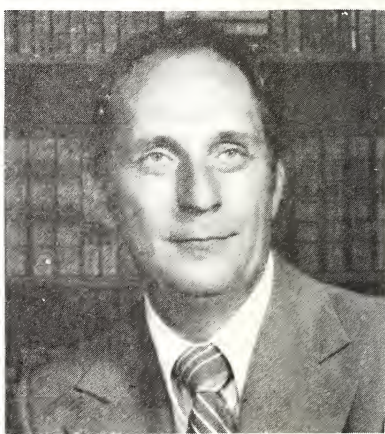
Rev. Kenneth C. Ferree
1963 - 1967



Rev. Roy Whisenhunt
1969 - 1978



Rev. Robert N. Hunsucker
1979 - 1984



Rev. Larry W. McEntire
1985 - present

Evolution of the United Church of Christ

As has been stated, Pleasant Union was organized as a Christian church in 1890. The Christian denomination has roots in two separate movements, one in New England and one in the South. The Southern movement was organized by James O'Kelly in 1794. These two groups merged in 1922 to form one consolidated "Christian" church. In 1931 the Christian church joined with the Congregational church to form the "*Congregational Christian*" denomination. Then in 1957 there was a merger of the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reform churches to form the "*United Church of Christ*."¹ It took several years after the merger to establish new administrative bodies, draw conference lines and work out details. Finally on September 30, 1965, North Carolina Secretary of State, Thad Eure stamped the merger documents and the "*Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ*" became a legal entity.² The merger did not require that member churches completely change their names and many did not in an effort to retain an identity with their heritage. So although you see churches names "*Congregational Christian*" and "*Evangelical and Reform*," that title is followed by (UCC) indicating that they are united with the United Church of Christ in principle and administratively.³

The organizational hierarchy of the United Church of Christ is as follows: the central governing body nationally is the "*General Synod*." It is composed of representatives from each "Conference" across the United States. Churches in North Carolina and eastern Virginia make up the "*Southern Conference*". Further, the "*Southern Conference*" is divided into three "*Associations*", Eastern Virginia, Eastern North Carolina and Western North Carolina, the latter of which Pleasant Union is a member.

Institutions supported by the Southern Conference include Elon College, Elon Homes for Children, Nazareth Children's Home and Catawba College. Its administrative offices are located in Graham, North Carolina.⁴

The Christian Sun

In 1844, Daniel Kerr, a Christian minister, established a newsletter to enhance communication between Christian Churches. Called *The Christian Sun*, it became a weekly publication. For fourteen years, 1950 - 1964, it was edited by an Asheboro minister, Rev. Fletcher Lester, and printed by Asheboro's Durham Printing Company.

The current newsletter, *Southern Conference News* is produced monthly by the conference office in Graham.

¹ From conversation with Diane Gill, History Room, Carleson Library, Elon College.

² *The Christian Sun*, Vol. No. 117, No. 39, October 5, 1965, page 6.

³ Diane Gill.

⁴ *Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ 1989 Yearbook*, pages 1-12.

Women of Pleasant Union

It is quite clear that women have played a substantial role in the organization and successful progression of Pleasant Union down through the years... as well as providing music for the services, food for the dinners, education for the children, home visitation for the shut -ins, flowers for the sick, and faithful attendance from Sunday to Sunday.

When the church first organized in 1890, women outnumbered the men almost two to one. At that first meeting five women were elected "collectors" for various church funds.¹ In 1892, Martisha McDowell (1870-1902) was elected church secretary at the young age of 22.² In October, 1893, two young women were elected as alternate delegates to attend a district meeting, Alice Yates (1875-1933) and Lenora Griffin (1870-1936).³



Group of Pleasant Union Ladies in the 1950's. (L to R) seated-Mattie Trotter, Esther Yates, Ruth McDowell, Martha McDowell, Zeola Trotter, Esther Garner; kneeling- Carrie Ridge, Allene Swaney, Lydia McDowell, Edith Trotter, Exie Snider, Allene McDowell, Clarice McDowell, Lennis McDowell; standing-Mrs. Billie McLeod, Lena Trotter, Bernice Trotter, May Ridge.

As early as 1920, a woman held the office of deaconess at Pleasant Union. Cora Yates Morris (1887-1967), wife of Brantson M. Morris, was elected deaconess on May 2, 1920.⁴ She is remembered by several present members as a devoted supporter of the church, whose enthusiasm often erupted into joyful praise during Sunday services and Revivals. Since that time, three other women have served in the office of deaconess: In 1972, Connie Davis served out the unexpired term of her late husband Gurney⁵; Esther Briles Yates and Ruby Ridge Fields were elected in 1974 and served until 1982.⁶

There have been three women to deliver sermons at our church thus far. Verlie Smith, a missionary from the Spoons Chapel Community, addressed the congregation during a revival in the 1940's.⁷ Also during the 1940's, Miss Pauline Winslow, a long time member of Pleasant Union until her move to Asheboro in 1963, held Sunday worship services occasionally in the absence of Rev. B. H. Lowdermilk. Pauline had a great interest in the ministry to the point of attending People's Bible School in High Point (now John Wesley College).⁸ In 1942, the church voted to give her a "*recommendation to Conference for license to preach the gospel*", though she says she decided not to pursue the licensure.⁹ In the winter of 1978-1979, Mrs. Ruth Anderson delivered several sermons during the illness of her husband, Rev. Andy Anderson, our pastor at that time.¹⁰

The "Ladies Society" of our church was especially active during the 1970's. Through various fund raising activities (including serving meals for Farmer Lion's Club meetings), their contributions led to the purchase of the church's first air conditioners in 1971, a new water fountain, a new organ, new hymn books and shrubbery for outside landscaping.

¹ Church minutes, Aug. 23, 1890.

² Church minutes, Dec., 1892.

³ Church minutes, Oct. 1893.

⁴ Church minutes, May 2, 1920.

⁵ Church minutes, Apr. 9, 1972.

⁶ Church Minutes, Sept. 7, 1974.

⁷ From conversation with Pauline Winslow.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Church minutes, Sept. 1942.

¹⁰ From conversation with Karen Anderson Nixon.



Ladies singing group in the third church around 1952. (L to R) Esther Garner at piano, Mazie McDowell Owens, Grace McDowell and Zeola Trotter.



Ruby Fields (L) and Esther Yates (R) served as deaconesses from 1974 - 1982.



Women at Pleasant Union in 1990. Front (L to R) Mary McDowell, Ora Clark, Ruby Fields, Maggie Trotter, Zeola Trotter, Sandra Bodenheimer; Standing (L to R) Margaret Snider, Hazel McDowell, Mattie Mae Swaney, Allene Swaney, Allene McDowell, Joyce McDowell, Marinda Yates, Alma McDowell, Imogene Ridge, Brenda McEntire, Vida Swaney and Exie Snider.

Churchmen Fellowship

At the 1944 session of the Southern Convention of Congregational Christian Churches, the Laymen's Fellowship was created as an auxiliary of the Convention. The purpose of the Fellowship was to *"organize the Men of the Convention and Conferences, in an effort and endeavor to enlist and use the men for larger work of the church."*¹ The organization plan provided for support and encouragement of Laymen's Fellowships at the convention, conference, district and local church level.²

The Pleasant Union Laymen's group was organized on November 27, 1955 with the help of Laymen from Pleasant Ridge Christian Church, including Mr. H.V. Cox, Jr., President of the Western North Carolina Laymen's Fellowship at that time. The group had ten initial members with Dallas McDowell serving as president; Ira McDowell, vice-president; Clarence Snider, secretary; and, Dannie Garner, treasurer. Dallas McDowell served as president of the group for almost nineteen years, until his death in 1974. Clarence Snider still serves as secretary of the group, having recorded minutes of over 400 meetings since 1955.³

The initial group of ten quickly grew to twenty-three the next year and its largest enrollment to date, twenty-six, in 1957. The group's monthly meetings usually include scripture, song, prayer and lively discussions about odd facts and interesting happenings from the Bible. Guest speakers have entertained the group on several occasions. The meetings also serve as a forum for discussion of various needs of the Church, both physical and spiritual.

Over the years, the Laymen have undertaken several projects including buying and installing wood stoves for the Sunday School rooms in 1956, constructing new picnic tables (from wire) in 1961, and purchasing new guttering for the new church in the 1970's. The Building Committee often used the group as a sounding board during construction of the new church in 1963. They have also contributed to Conference projects such as development of the Moonelon Convention Conference Center and Camp at Elon College.⁴

Some interesting entries were found when looking through the Laymen's records:

Dannie Garner often entertained the group with singing and playing hymns on the piano. In April of 1958, Dannie rendered four songs on the harmonica, much to the enjoyment of those present.⁵

In June, 1967 the group discussed the sign for the front of the new church. After the meeting, Dallas McDowell took the group to the Joshua Morgan farm near Piney Grove Church, to see a forked locust tree he had found to accomodate the bell and church sign.⁶

Secretary Clarence Snider entered this information on February 16, 1969: *"No meeting on this date because of snow all Sunday afternoon and night amounting to 13 inches before quitting."*⁷

¹ Handbook of the Laymen's Fellowship of the Southern Convention of Congregational Christian Churches, 1959, page 3.

² Ibid.

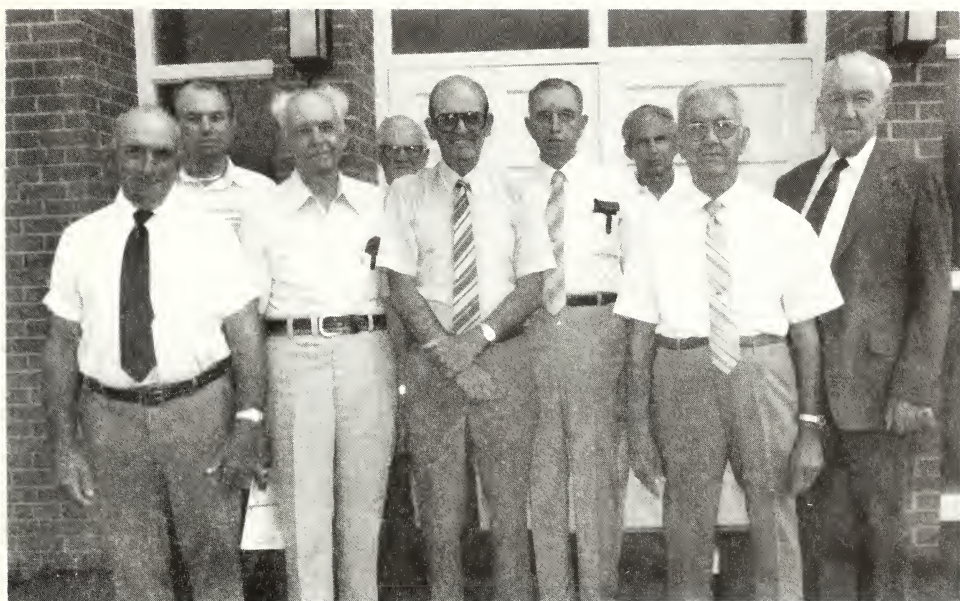
³ From Churchmen Fellowship meeting minutes.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., June, 1967.

⁷ Ibid., February, 1969.



Men's class at Pleasant Union (L to R): Edwin Ridge, Roy Lee Swaney, Cletus Swaney, George Yates, Richard Fields, Alvin McDowell, E.L. Clark, Clarence Snider, Ira McDowell.



Laymen's Group enjoying fellowship and ice cream at the McEntire home. (L to R) Rev. Larry McEntire, Clarence Snider, Richard Fields, Alvin McDowell, Brenda McEntire, Clay Yates, Steve Grubb and Ira McDowell.

Young Folks

The children and young adults of Pleasant Union have been a source of joy, pride...and unpredictability over the years. They have memorized endless speeches, Bible verses and play lines, much to the delight of parents and grandparents sitting on the edge of their pew in the congregation. Their singing has warmed our hearts, and their questions have stumped the sharpest Sunday School teacher.

Many adults have devoted lots of time and energy to the organization of Christian education for the children here. Sunday School classes for them have been held since the church began. In the early 1900's, lessons were printed on pictorial story cards. We have a collection of these cards belonging to Lewis Trotter dating back as far as 1913.

Mr. Trotter's collection

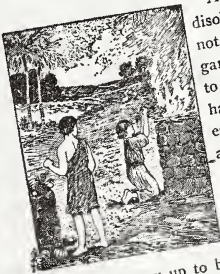
THE LESSON STORIES CARD.

WEEKLY. (NO. 1. PART 4)
VOL. XIV.]
DAVID C. COOK PUB. CO., Elgin, Ill., and 36 Washington St., Chicago.

Lesson 4. Cain and Abel.
Read—Gen. 4 and 5.

Jan. 26, 1913.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.—1 John 3: 15.



LESSON STORY.
After Adam and Eve had disobeyed God they could not stay in the garden any longer. They had to go outside. It was hard to get food. After a while they had a baby boy whom they called Abel. This boy could help his father.

When Cain grew up to be a man he worked in a field and raised grain. When Abel grew up he was a shepherd, taking care of his father's sheep. One day Cain and Abel brought their gifts to God. Each brought what he was good at. Cain brought grain and Abel brought a lamb. God was pleased with Abel's gift and gave him a blessing. Cain was angry because his gift was not accepted. He killed his brother Abel. God punished Cain by banishing him from the land.



HOW GOD TAKES CARE OF US
Memory Verse: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
Psa. 23:1.

LESSON PICTURE CARDS.

LESS. 1. OCT. 4, 1914. VOL. 36. NO. 4. PART 1.

CHRIST ANOINTED FOR BURIAL.

1. Simon made a feast for Jesus and his disciples in his home at Bethany.
2. While they were eating, a woman poured precious perfume on Jesus' head.
3. The house was filled with the sweet odor of the perfume.
4. She spent much money for the perfume because she wished to show her love for Jesus.
5. Judas found fault with her for doing so.
6. He said the money should have been given to the poor.
7. Jesus was pleased with her and said, "She hath done what she could."
8. He said to the disciples, "This perfume was bought for the burial of the Son of Man."

gospel should be told.

Jesus' head?

done?

er what did?

Mail Matter.

per quarter.

Bible School has been held at Pleasant Union every summer since the 1950's. Esther Briles Yates remembers helping with the first one. She recalls water being hauled in for the children, and although there were no fans or air conditioners in the (third) church, they had wonderful attendance.



Group of children from 1950's

Extracurricular activities have also been provided through the "Young People's Group". Ira McDowell has always taken special interest in this group through the years. He says, "There is nothing I have enjoyed more than working with the young people." He describes the years around 1950 as the "best time of his life", when there were 20 or 30 young people in his Sunday School class, and they often had picnics, contests and went on trips. Kent Ridge, who was about 12 years old then, remembers Ira and Clarence Snider taking the class on a trip to Morrow Mountain State Park. They rode in the back of General Wholesale's delivery truck. He describes that trip as "the biggest (he) had ever been on." He also remembers being in a play the class produced in the 1950's. Ira took the group to several area churches to give the performance.



1950's Christmas play presented in pulpit area of the third church.



Angels in the play were (L to R) Clela Mae Swaney, Nancy Morris, Inez McDowell, Linda Trotter and Nell Yates.

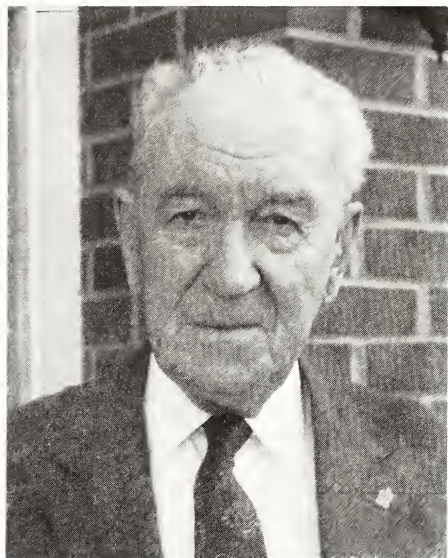
Other youth have traveled to neighboring churches to give singing performances. A young men's group, composed of Hal Worth Winslow, Bill Davis, James Yates and Paul Yates (accompanied by Judy Yates at the piano), gave performances of Christian music in the mid 1950's. In the 1960's, a group of young girls did the same. Referred to as simply "The Girls", Peggy and Betty Snider, Judy (and later Sheila) Fields, and Ellen Trotter, with Gerrelene McDowell at the piano, often sang at special services and functions. They performed during the first service held in the brick church on December 8, 1963. Earlier that year, their Young People's Group had presented a large Bible to be used on the new pulpit stand. It is still used today.



**1950's young men's quartet.
(L to R) Hal Worth Winslow, Bill Davis, Judy Yates (pianist), James Yates, Paul Yates.**

During the 1970's the number of youth dwindled at Pleasant Union, but interested adults made sure that there were educational activities provided for them. Ira McDowell sponsored several trips, including an overnite one to the mountains of Alleghany County, and one to hear Billy Graham speak in Raleigh's Carter-Finley Stadium. He has particularly fond memories of the latter trip because three of the group, Phyllis Swaney, Kathy Bristow, and Sharon Ridge accepted Christ that night and later became members of the church.

Pleasant Union Personalities



Ira L. McDowell

Someone once wrote, "When a man dies, a library is lost." We were most fortunate to be able to draw from the extensive "library" of Ira L. McDowell when researching the history of Pleasant Union. At age 85, he is able to recall many facts and occurrences not found in church minutes or in anyone else's memory. He is the only member to have knowledge of the first church building, used up until around 1920, or the subscription school, which he attended around 1911.

Ira was born in 1905 at the homeplace of his grandfather, Jeremiah

McDowell, along the banks of the Uwharrie River a quarter mile east of the church. He attended Pleasant Union as a child with parents, Eli and Martha and their ten other children. He left home in 1926 to attend High Point Business School, and then in 1928 began a ten-year stint with the Reynolds Tobacco Company, which sent him to different areas of the state. Lucky for us, he could not ignore the ties with his home church and rejoined us after settling in Ashboro in 1938. There, he opened the General Wholesale Company with partners Roby Garner and Fred Patterson.

Ira became well known in Randolph County during his tenure as Chairman of the County Board of Commissioners, a post which he held from 1956 to 1970. He is still very much admired and respected in county circles and had a building housing county services named for him in 1981.

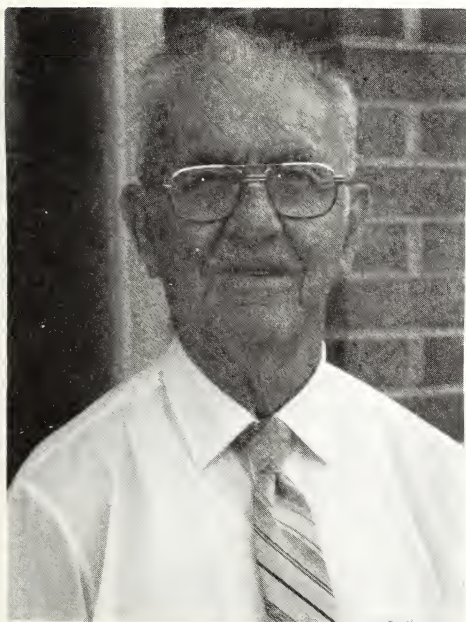
Since officially becoming a member of Pleasant Union with wife Ruth Holleman McDowell in 1940, he has served in many capacities here as well as working on local, state and national committees for the United Church of Christ organization. His contributions to the progress of this church are many and include being instrumental in the writing of the Constitution and Standing Rules, adopted in 1978. But he will be remembered most for his influence on the young people here. He has spent many hours preparing for and teaching their classes, sponsoring their activities and serving as an excellent role model.

His name is synonymous with Pleasant Union Church. Thanks, Ira, for a lifetime of faithful service.



Ruth Holleman McDowell

The late Ruth McDowell, shown here with husband, Ira, on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1989, served as church secretary for fourteen years, from 1944 to 1958. She also worked with Ira in sponsoring many activities for youth groups through the years.



Clarence Snider

Our church minutes state that Clarence Snider was elected deacon on October 11, 1936. He has faithfully served in that position for 54 years now. Having been voted as Chairman of the Board of Deacons in 1968, he still holds that post. He has served in various other capacities through the years including Sunday School teacher and secretary of the Laymen's Fellowship since its conception in 1955.



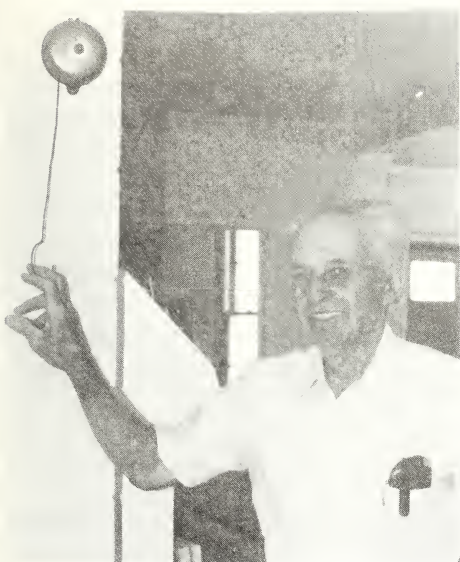
Esther Gallimore Garner

One of Pleasant Union's most faithful members over the years was the late Esther Garner. She played the piano for services here for over forty years until her death in 1985. She joined our church with husband Dannie in 1951, and served as church secretary for nineteen years, from 1958 until 1977. Much of the information used in this book came from her detailed notations.



Dallas McDowell

The late Dallas McDowell attended Pleasant Union his entire life, officially becoming a member in 1956. He was a "lay preacher" holding many services during the absence of called ministers, and during Revivals and Memorial Day services. He often helped with Baptisms and funerals. Upon his death in 1974, church secretary Esther Garner wrote, *"He will be greatly missed by our fellowship and community."*



Cletus Swaney

You can set your clock by Cletus Swaney, who has promptly signalled the end of Sunday School for over thirty years. He began "ringing the bell" during the years when the third church was in use and has done so ever since.



Longest Memberships

Marinda Harris Yates (at right) has been a member at Pleasant Union for the most number of years, having joined when the second church building was in use, some sixty years ago. Exie McDowell Snider is the first current member to have joined in the third church, having done so in 1935, fifty-five years ago.

Faithful Attendance



Many church-goers remember the long chain of perfect attendance bars worn proudly on the lapel of **Bennie Ridge's** coat. There were 25 of them, most of which represented perfect attendance at Pleasant Union's Sunday School (he had obtained a few from years at Hoover's Grove and a church in Trinity). He, pictured at left with wife, **Etta Tysinger Ridge**, died in 1976.

Mattie Mae McDowell Swaney was recognized during an Easter service on March 29, 1964 for 15 years of perfect Sunday School attendance. She has always lived within a half

mile of the church and has often helped with starting the wood stoves, mowing the lawn and manicuring the cemetery with husband, **Baxter**.

"Note" able Service

Having once been a member of the Carolinians Quartet, **Richard Fields** has been a valuable asset to our choir for 30 years. He also served as church treasurer for 15 years.

Zeola Gallimore Trotter has also contributed much to the music at Pleasant Union, having been a choir member and song leader for 35 years.

In 1981, the Ladies Society decided to use their treasury dollars to purchase an organ for the church. There was just one problem...no one in the congregation could *play* an organ. So, **Carroll Ridge** took lessons in Greensboro and organ selections have enhanced our services ever since.

Remnant Remembrances:

Do you remember:

- having watermelon feasts at the farm of Alvin and Allene McDowell?
- the beautiful cedar Christmas trees Alvin McDowell has provided through the years?
- the beautiful flowers Allene McDowell shares with us almost every Sunday?
- "*pounding*" the preacher?
- Richard Fields' coat catching on fire during a Christmas program?
- Amanda Gallimore hiding under the front table rather than reciting her speech during a children's program?
- Harold Gallimore coming as Santa Claus?
- June 13, 1971 being declared Roy C. Whisenhunt Day?
- Kent Ridge taking us on hayrides?
- the young people making homemade "fireworks" during New Year's Eve parties?
- Lois McDowell and James Staley being the first to marry in the "*high*" church, February, 1954?
- the snow and sleet that fell during Sheila Fields and Terry Auman's wedding in December, 1974?
- the torrential rain that fell during Sharon Ridge and Jeff Hughes' wedding, October, 1983...so much so, that Roger King had to pull out several cars that had become stuck in the mud?

Everyone has their own treasury of favorite memories from Pleasant Union. Let's strive to make the next one hundred years just as memorable.

Bibliography

Blair, J. A., Reminiscences of Randolph County, Reece & Elam, 1890. Reprinted by Randolph County Historical Society, 1968.

The Christian Sun, Vol. No. 117, No. 39, October 5, 1965.

Crownfield, Frederic R., etal., White Plains Friends Meeting 1850 - 1982, the North Carolina Friends Historical Society, 1983.

Denny, Zeb R., Farmer - Yesterday and Today, Wooten Printing Co., Inc., 1981.

Handbook of the Laymen's Fellowship, Southern Convention of Congregational Christian Churches, 1959.

McDowell, L. Jerry, Cemetery Records, Pleasant Union United Church of Christ, copyright 1980.

McDowell, L. Jerry, The McDowells of Northampton, Wake, Randolph, Guilford and Davidson Counties, Chamber Graphics, 1983.

Morgan, Dwight, History of Piney Grove Church, 1973.

Randolph County, 1779 - 1979, Randolph County Historical Society and the Randolph Arts Guild, 1979.

Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ 1989 Yearbook.

HUNSUCKER PRINTING CO., INC. • ASHEBORO, NC